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FROM USMISSION UNESCO PARIS

FOR OES - ANDREW REYNOLDS, ANTOINETTE CONDO, BARRIE RIPIN, CHRISTINE DAWSON
FOR IO - JIM DUFTY
DEPARTMENT PASS NSF FOR ROSE GOMBAY
DEPARTMENT PASS OSTP FOR GENE WHITNEY
DEPARTMENT PASS USGS FOR VERNE SCHNEIDER, MATTHEW LARSEN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [UNESCO](#) [SCI](#) [SENV](#) [AORC](#) [EAID](#)
SUBJECT: UNESCO REFORM: SECRETARIAT AND EXPERTS SPLIT ON WAY FORWARD
FOR ONGOING SCIENCES REVIEW

¶1. Summary: In recent weeks, there have been a number of meetings relating to the ongoing review of the Natural Sciences and Social and Human Sciences sectors. The panel itself met January 9-12. During that week, the Indian Ambassador held a January 10 dinner where guests included some panel experts and members of the Secretariat. In addition, Ambassador Oliver organized a January 11

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evening meeting to which she invited like-minded ambassadors and panel experts to discuss the review process. Following the panel's meeting, on January 18, the Geneva Group of donor countries met with the ADGs for both the Natural Sciences and Social and Human Sciences sectors; the sciences review was a topic of discussion. And, at the January 19 Executive Board question and answer session, Director General Matsuura and Deputy Director General Barbosa responded to queries on this subject.

¶2. At the January 18 meeting of the Geneva Group, ADG for Social Sciences Sane said that the panel was on a consensual track that would enable it to conclude its report soon. (ADG Sane's remarks to the Geneva Group were part of his campaign to maintain the status quo and with it, his own position, an effort buttressed by the January 10 dinner hosted by the Indian Ambassador.) At his January 19 question and answer session with the Executive Board, the Director General and Deputy Director General Matsuura said that the review panel is on its way to concluding a draft report; DDG Barbosa outlined a number of recommendations that he said the panel had endorsed. But in fact, this version of the state of play differs from that described by four expert panel members at the January 11 meeting the Ambassador hosted. At this meeting, the experts said that they need more time to consider recommendations to reform the

two sectors; they reported considerable pressure from the "internal" (secretariat) members of the panel to complete their work in time for findings to be integrated into the new Medium-Term Strategy, to be adopted at the October 2007 General Conference. The experts received needed encouragement to take an independent stance in favor of reform from the ambassadors present. To allow the panel time to finish its work, the ambassadors expressed a willingness to consider the possibility of not adopting a new Medium-Term Strategy at the 2007 General Conference.

¶13. On January 12, the last day of the meeting of the experts' panel, Deputy Director General Barbosa pressed the panel to work to the deadline: a final report due in advance of the April Executive Board, with conclusions to be folded into the new Medium Term Strategy to be adopted at the October General Conference. However, the outside experts expressed continuing frustration with the lack of serious discussion of recommendations that had been proposed, and at the lack of consensus. While the committee had come to agreement on a vision for UNESCO science and on an overall strategic planning approach, several members, except France and the UK, felt that the draft C-4 and C-5 documents were not central to the charge of the Committee and that too much time had been spent discussing them, and not enough time discussing and debating the recommendations. Not until 1400 on Friday (when only the external experts from France, UK, Norway, Morocco, Panama, India, and the US remained), were recommendations put on the table. The external experts also expressed frustration at the overall process, and concern that they lacked independence and were being pressed to endorse an agenda developed by the Secretariat. The panel members decided to set up a separate drafting team, led by the expert from Morocco and including the experts from France and Norway, to develop their report. Only after much discussion did the Committee agree to include Barbosa on the writing team. However, they felt that a consensus report would require additional deliberation, even recommending that there be at least one more meeting of the full review panel. End Summary.

ADGs Say that the Review Process is on Track...

¶14. At the January 18 Geneva Group meeting, the ADGs for the Natural Sciences and Social and Human Sciences sectors were the special guests. (Note: Both of them are "internal" members of the review panel, as are DDG Barbosa and IOC Executive Secretary Bernal. End Note) On the sciences review, ADG Erdelen claimed that the panel had reached tentative conclusions. Their report, still a work in progress, will be ready in mid-February, Erdelen said. One of its important elements will be a "vision going beyond the Medium-Term Strategy time frame." This report will also address the issue of the intergovernmental programs, and sunset clauses. According to ADG Sane, the panel's most recent meeting finished on a note of consensus; he said that DDG Barbosa would draft the panel's report, with "certain recommendations going to the DG." Sane stressed that as the Executive Board had already agreed on certain proposals for the C4/C5, the DG will have to "balance" the recommendations of the committee in order to present something "acceptable" to the April 2007 Executive Board. Sane reported that the panel had agreed on a vision for the sciences, derived from UNESCO's constitution, that promotes peace and poverty reduction, and as lesser priorities, sustainable development and the dialogue among civilizations. Future programs will be evaluated against these criteria. According to Sane, panelists also stressed the role of scientists in capacity building in developing countries to help emerging economies; they also advocated that all sciences programs should aim at developing educational materials for universities.

¶15. Queried by Ambassador Oliver on whether there is consensus within the panel, Assistant Director General for Social Sciences Sane portrayed the review process as on track. Pressed by Ambassador Oliver on his comment that DDG Barbosa would draft the report, Sane said that in fact the Secretariat would provide a draft to panel members, reporting that the experts had formed a drafting group. The report must be ready by mid-February, in time for the Executive Board. Then there will be a "back and forth between the Executive Board and the review committee to get it right before the General Conference."

¶16. One Geneva Group member noted that Erdelen seemed much more forward leaning than Sane with regard to the review process.

Erdelen stressed that he had already taken steps to address some of the panel's concerns, for example those regarding the lack of visibility of UNESCO's natural sciences programs. Sane, on the other hand, indicated that he could not be responsible for reporting the actual impact of his sector's programs, saying that this lay beyond his control. And, Sane - evoking an absurdly long list of new programs that he claimed the panelists had endorsed -- took care to lay down a marker that the member states would have the last say on the panel's report.

...While Building Support for the Status Quo

¶7. Sane's presentation to the Geneva Group was part of a campaign that he has launched to preserve his position within UNESCO. This was apparent at a dinner organized by the Indian Ambassador, ostensibly in honor of the Indian member of the sciences review panel. In fact, it was a chance for the influential ambassador to stress her support for Sane - and for the continued independence of his sector -- to the other guests, who included DDG Barbosa, and the UK, U.S., and French experts on the review panel. Ambassador Oliver was the only other Ambassador included in the event.

¶8. In a disturbing aside, the Indian Ambassador remarked that the experts would submit their report to delegations, and amend it based on their comments. Ambassador Oliver stressed that the role of the experts was to give member states their best ideas; although member states would of course react to these ideas, the experts should not change them in response to the opinions of the delegations.

DG Matsuura and DDG Barbosa Also Say Review On Track

¶9. Queried by member states at the January 19 question and answer session, DG Matsuura said that the sciences review panel had endorsed key elements of the draft Medium-Term Strategy for the sectors, notably the need for more intersectoral work. In his response, DDG Barbosa indicated that the panel had finished Phase 2, where it had "provided the DG with recommendations to be taken into consideration for the C4 and C5 (Medium Term Strategy and Draft Program and Budget)." He said that the panel would prepare a report that would be submitted to the April Executive Board. But he said that the panel's work may need to be extended to include a third phase, lasting from the April Executive Board to the October General Conference, in order to "prepare the organization to implement the new C4 and C5." Barbosa highlighted new ideas that he said had been endorsed by the experts. In addition to intersectorality, these "new avenues" included: increased focus on the interfaces between science and culture and between science and education; dialogue between knowledge systems; more focus on higher education; and energy. The goal is to ensure that all programs contribute to the fight against poverty. The panel's other recommendations include reorientation of the intergovernmental programs, and the adoption of a road map for the next 20 years in science. Barbosa declared that adopting the panel's recommendations would enable UNESCO to assume its role as "the leading organization for science within the UN system." Barbosa said that he did not want to go into more detail so as to preserve some suspense for the April Executive Board.

U.S. Mission Rallies Support for Reform

¶10. But in fact, this account of the panel's work differs from information revealed by expert panel members at the January 11 meeting the Ambassador hosted. This meeting was attended by the ambassadors of the UK, Canada, and Japan and by the deputy permanent delegate of Norway, as well as by the review panel experts from the UK, Norway, the U.S. and Morocco (US Mission science officer, note taker). Ambassador Oliver began by briefing the ambassadors, the UK and Canadian ambassadors having only recently arrived at UNESCO. She highlighted a series of questions: What is the role of this expert panel, and how can its independence be guaranteed? Is the October 2007 deadline for adoption of the Medium-Term strategy still feasible, given that the panel had reportedly not completed its task, and there is an ongoing current of other UNESCO reform initiatives? Given the growing continuum between the social sciences and the natural sciences, does it make sense to maintain two separate sectors at UNESCO? The Norwegian permanent delegate suggested that the General Conference could simply adopt a concise road map to guide the work of the secretariat as it continued its work on the Medium-Term Strategy until 2009. He said he thought

that a merger of the two sectors would make sense, given increased synergies between the two disciplines. The Canadian ambassador posited that a weak report supporting the status quo would be worse than no report. And, if the panel could not present a strong set of recommendations in time for integration into the Medium-Term Strategy, the General Conference would not be an appropriate last-minute negotiating venue. He opined that, based on his past UN experience, the General Conference was not in fact obliged to adopt a new medium-term strategy at its next meeting.

¶11. The Norwegian expert arrived first, and expressed concerns that he said had led him to attempt to withdraw twice from the panel; the other experts echoed these concerns as they joined the conversation.

The panel had only recently begun to consider possible recommendations, having devoted much time in the first months on "hearings" meant to familiarize the experts with UNESCO. This exercise precluded real interchange among the experts, who had only recently learned to work together. All of the experts expressed surprise at the inclusion of members of the secretariat on the review panel, saying that this contradicted established principles of independence. In practice, these "internal" members, with the exception of IOC Executive Secretary Patricio Bernal, tended to be resistant to change. The experts from Norway and Morocco stressed that they believed that the experts should not have devoted so much time to reviewing the draft C-4 and C-5 (medium-term strategies and program and budgets) documents, with the UK expert demurring, seconded by the UK ambassador; they and the Japanese ambassador stressed the need for specific recommendations from the panel. Despite these concerns, the experts present agreed that they had made a breakthrough at that day's meeting, when Norway and Morocco had commandeered the chair to outline a "matrix" of criteria to evaluate programs. But more time was needed to complete the task.

¶12. In light of the concerns voiced by the experts, the Japanese ambassador expressed the view that the panel needed to continue its work, perhaps with reconfigured leadership. When queried, he said that he would need to seek guidance on whether he could support postponing adoption of a new Medium-Term Strategy. But he also stressed the importance of reaching out to other member states in support of these ideas. The Moroccan expert struck an upbeat note, saying that with more time and sharpened working methods, the panel could make substantial progress.

¶13. Heartened by the support expressed by the ambassadors, the experts concluded the evening by strategizing for the final day of the review panel's meeting. The Norwegian deputy permanent delegate stressed that the ambassador's meeting had been "crucial" in plotting the way forward for the review process. (Comment: Still, one question raised earlier by the Norwegian expert remained pertinent -- would other experts on the panel be willing to take a stand in favor of a serious effort at reform, or might they succumb to pressure from their delegations favoring the status quo? End Comment.)

Experts Panel Asserts Need for Consensus on Recommendations

¶14. Although initially hopeful to complete their review in the schedule outlined by the Secretariat, by this meeting the outside experts had only recently begun to work well together and make real progress. Although not all the outside experts continue to be actively engaged in the process (some have not participated, even via email, for several months), those that are expressed hope that they are on-track to make a significant and lasting contribution to UNESCO science, if allowed adequate time to complete their work. They cited detailed findings, an agreed upon vision, and well thought out framework for strategic planning, but no detailed discussion of the recommendations. The US representative put back on the table several recommendations that had not been discussed at all. Other recommendations had been discussed, but no consensus had been reached. The committee established a separate and independent (consisting of external experts, and led by the Moroccan member) drafting group to begin work on a consensus report, but after much discussion agreed that Barbosa should also work with the writing group. Allowing for time to discuss the issues and reach consensus, this report should be completed in the April/May timeframe - any less time would not be adequate to deliver a substantive report.

¶15. Comment: The expert panelists were clearly frustrated by the timetable imposed by the secretariat, and by the secretariat's role in the review. Of course, in pressing for closure, the secretariat is implementing the timetable endorsed by the 2005 General Conference; participation of the secretariat in the panel's work might also be viewed as a means of getting "buy-in" from the sectors under review. But it is clear now that the timetable for the panel's work is not realistic. We are pleased that the experts refused to be rushed along, and that we gained agreement from some like-minded ambassadors that the experts should be given time to complete the job, including possibly by reconsidering the deadline for adoption of the medium-term strategy. This was just a start. The question of postponing adoption of the new Medium-Term Strategy was pressed further at the DG's question and answer session, reported septel. End Comment.
Koss